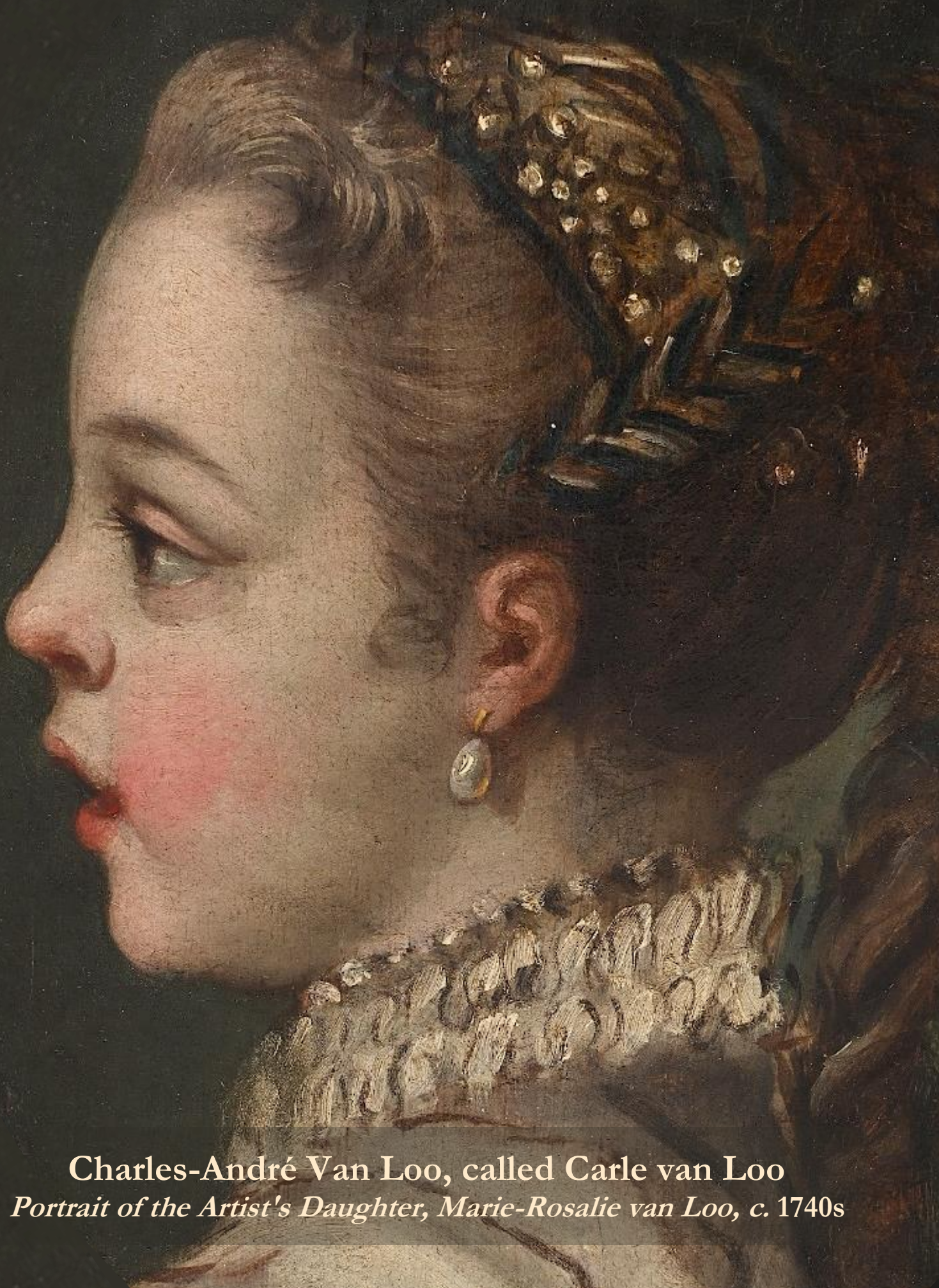


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Charles-André Van Loo, called Carle van Loo
Portrait of the Artist's Daughter, Marie-Rosalie van Loo, c. 1740s

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CHARLES-ANDRÉ VAN LOO, called Carle van Loo
(Nice 1705 - 1765 Paris)

PORTRAIT of the Artist's Daughter, Marie-Rosalie van Loo, c. 1740s

Oil on canvas transferred to panel.

24.2 × 19 cm; 9 1/2 x 7 1/2 in (unframed);

43.4 × 38.5 cm; 17 1/8 x 15 1/8 in (framed).

Provenance

Private collection, UK.

Reference Literature

M.-C. Sahut, *Carle Vanloo. Premier peintre du roi*, exh. cat., Nice, Musée Chéret, Clermont-Ferrand, Musée Bargoin, Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1977.

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This intimate portrait depicts Marie-Rosalie van Loo, the artist's daughter, in a cameo-like profile against a subdued background. Shown from the chest up, she faces to the viewer's left, allowing the elegant contour of her face and neck to be sharply silhouetted. Her complexion is rendered with delicate, luminous flesh tones that contrast gently with the dark neutral ground, a balance which spotlights her youthful features. The child's pearl earring catches a tiny highlight, subtly drawing attention to her ear and profile. She wears her hair in an ornate mid-18th-century coiffure: swept back and gathered into a cascading ponytail, adorned with ribbons and laces. The almost informal warmth of her depiction, with softly parted lips and a serene, absorbed expression, keeps the portrait firmly in the realm of the personal rather than the officially monumental: there is no elaborate background or iconographic attribute, with the focus being entirely on the child's visage. This unadorned presentation underscores the painting's likely purpose as a private keepsake or study.

The brushwork is refined and controlled, especially in the soft modelling of her forehead, nose and cheeks, yet it loosens slightly in the curls and tendrils of hair to suggest their texture. Van Loo's technique here is typical of the French Rococo penchant for smooth finish and graceful coloration, qualities for which contemporaries praised him; indeed, critics from the likes of Jacques Lacombe noted that works of this kind were "*composed with clarity, drawn with elegance, and gracefully colored*".¹

Marie-Rosalie (1737–1762) was Carle van Loo's only surviving daughter. She would have been a child in the 1740s - the probable timeframe of this painting - and was married in 1758, only to die tragically in childbirth in 1762 at about 25 years of age. Notably, Carle van Loo frequently portrayed his family members; contemporary accounts and modern scholarship confirm that he depicted his daughter Marie-Rosalie on numerous occasions, not only in private portraits but also by using her as a model in some of his compositions.²

A comparable portrait of Marie-Rosalie found its way into one of Carle van Loo's major allegorical paintings. In 1752–53, van Loo painted a celebrated series known as *The Four Arts* (Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Music) as decorative overdoors for Madame de Pompadour's château de Bellevue. In the canvas representing *Music* (1753, now in the Legion of Honor, San Francisco), Van Loo depicted a child in profile playing a keyboard instrument, widely believed to be modelled on Marie-Rosalie herself (see Fig. 1). The

¹ See Collection Deloynes 5, 12-15, no. 59.

² See M.-C. Sahut, *Carle Vanloo. Premier peintre du roi*, exh. cat., Nice, Musée Chéret, Clermont-Ferrand, Musée Bargoin, Nancy, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1977.

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resemblance is striking: the child musician in *Music* shares the same turned profile, hair style, and youthful countenance seen in this portrait. When the *Four Arts* series was exhibited at the Salon of 1753, critics particularly applauded the innovative use of children as personifications of the arts.³ This innovative choice lent the works a delightful charm and was soon widely imitated by other Rococo artists such as François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard.

A pastel drawing on blue paper attributed to van Loo can be directly related to our portrait, with identical composition and physiognomic details, including the decorative elements in the hair (Fig. 2). It might have possibly served as a study for the *Music* painting, previously cited. The motif, slightly extended in the lower part, was taken up by Louis-Marin Bonnet in c. 1764 for a print, dedicated to Carle van Loo himself, where the identification with his daughter is made explicit in the title (Fig. 3).

In addition to the profile studies, Van Loo produced other sketches of Marie-Rosalie that shed light on his artistic approach to depicting children. A closely related example is a chalk drawing of the girl at play, *Marie-Rosalie van Loo holding a windmill*, in which she is shown absorbed in blowing on a small windmill toy, her gaze lifted upward in concentration (Fig. 4).

Carle van Loo was one of the preeminent French painters of the Rococo era. Born in Nice into a dynasty of artists (the van Loo family of painters), he trained under his elder brother Jean-Baptiste van Loo and won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1724. After further study in Italy, van Loo established himself in Paris, becoming a professor at the Académie Royale in 1737. His rise was swift: he enjoyed the patronage of Madame de Pompadour and other elite clients, embracing a wide range of genres, from grand historical and religious tableaux to portraits and charming genre scenes. In 1762 he attained the highest artistic honour of the realm, being appointed *Premier Peintre du Roi* (First Painter to the King) by Louis XV.

³ P. Rosenberg and M.C. Stewart, in the catalogue of the exhibition *French Painting 1500-1825*, The San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, 1987, p. 305.

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Fig. 1. Carle van Loo, *'Music'*, 1752-1753, oil on canvas.
San Francisco, Legion of Honor.

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Fig. 2. Carle van Loo (?), *Head of a young girl turned to the left (Portrait of Marie Rosalie van Loo)*, Pastel, with touches of black crayon and red chalk. Private collection.

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Fig. 3. Louis-Marin Bonnet, *Marie-Rosalie Vanloo*, c. 1764, chalk manner printed in black and white. Washington, National Gallery of Art.

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Fig. 4. Carle van Loo, *Portrait of Marie Rosalie van Loo holding a windmill*, black stone and white chalk. Previously with Stéphane Renard Fine Art.

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